

Summary: National Park Service Human Resources Officials Recommended an Improper Hiring Process

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We investigated allegations that U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) or National Park Service (NPS) officials may have improperly influenced two hiring actions. The first hiring action resulted in the promotion of an NPS employee from a GS-9 to a GS-11 supervisory position in 2018, and the second action resulted in the promotion of the same employee to a GS-12 supervisory position in 2020. We also investigated an allegation that an NPS official who was related to the employee may have influenced both hiring actions.

We did not find evidence substantiating the allegations of impropriety related to the 2018 hiring action. We also did not find evidence substantiating the allegation that the employee's relative influenced either hiring action. Further, we did not find evidence that any other DOI or NPS management officials improperly influenced the promotion of the employee or that management instructed the human resources (HR) officials to grant an advantage to the employee. We did not investigate the employee's actual eligibility or qualifications for a promotion.

We did find, however, that NPS HR officials involved in the 2020 hiring action intentionally recommended a hiring process that granted an improper preference or advantage to the employee in violation of 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(6) and that the HR officials' actions did not follow merit system principles and the NPS *Merit Promotion Plan*. Specifically, HR officials advertised the position competitively but intentionally restricted it in a way that granted an advantage to the employee because doing so was perceived as easier and faster than promoting the employee noncompetitively based on an accretion-of-duties promotion, which was the method that NPS management originally proposed.

This is a summary of an investigative report we issued to the Acting NPS Director.

